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BOYS' LIFE

FOR
ALL
BOYS

September's here again, bringing school and, of course, the latest BL. This month you'll read about Jim Seymour, Notre Dame's **Instant All-American**, a football phenom described in full by ex-lineman Robert Deindorfer . . . You know what your school days are like, but how about **School Days—the Italian Way**? Author Al Silverman jetted to Europe, followed the classroom activities of a teen-age Italian boy, and turned in an article on Fabbio's six-day class week that should make you glad to have it so good . . . If you'd like to try a new type of mental gymnastics, glance at **Programmed Learning**. Astronomy is the subject here, but it's taught by a method that can be applied to anything . . . How's your knowledge of geography? Not so hot? Then check your books on Australia and New Zealand before reading Evelyn Nadel's **Outback Scouting Is In**—it's way out . . . Walter Chandoha, photographer extraordinary, is back with **Pets**, a delightful photo-and-text visit to animal-land . . . John R. Tunis (see below) created a touching, exciting World War II story, **The Killing at Nogent-Plage**. It shows just how hard war can be . . . Our Liechtenstein correspondent, Jack Ritchie, has filed another funny tale. Called **When I Look Back I See Everybody**, it's about this long-legged lass with cross-country running on her mind and blackmail in her heart . . . When an armchair sailor with a peg leg finds a mouse has moved into his wooden limb, he proves that humor is a many-splintered thing. So come aboard with Robert F. Griffin's **The Stowaway** . . . Now, let's meet:



JOHN R. TUNIS

The author of "The Killing at Nogent-Plage" is a man who has brought pleasure and adventure to generations of boys. His sport books, alone, helped form the basis for many a youngster's dreams of athletic glory. A Harvard graduate who was a two-miler and varsity tennis player, his World War I service provided a strong background for his story starting in this issue.



BILL JOHNSON, JR.

Here's proof that talent will be rewarded at any age. Bill's cartoon, see page 90, resulted "from my experience as a Scout." An Eagle Scout, Bill lives in Coon Rapids, Minn., is an "A" student, and a cartoonist-reporter for his school newspaper. We think Master William has a bright future as a cartoonist—or in any other challenging career this bright young man may choose to follow.

FICTION

- 29 The Killing at Nogent-Plage, Part 1 . . . John R. Tunis
- 34 When I Look Back I See Everybody . . . Jack Ritchie
- 52 The Stowaway . . . Robert F. Griffin

ARTICLES

- 32 School Days—the Italian Way . . . Al Silverman
- 36 Programmed Learning
- 38 Outback Scouting Is In . . . Evelyn Nadel
- 44 Student Railbirds
- 48 Instant All-American . . . Robert Deindorfer
- 56 Pets . . . Walter Chandoha

CARTOON FEATURES

- 69 Pee Wee Harris
- 71 Space Conquerors
- 71 The Bible: Joseph is Enslaved
- 72 Scouting Rounds a Guy Out
- 72 Rocky Stoneaxe
- 73 The Tracy Twins
- 74 Campcraft Quickies
- 76 Scouts in Action

86 PROGRAM HELPS

SPECIAL FEATURES

- 4 Making the Scene . . . Fran Smith
- 8 Tips on Getting Along with Us . . . Sandy Roberts
- 10 They All Come When You Call . . . Byron W. Dalrymple
- 16 Autos . . . Ed Janicki
- 20 Fido=Crazy Coins . . . Murray T. Pringle
- 26 Steak for Three . . . Tim Moore
- 65 August's Checkmate Puzzler Answer . . . Bobby Fischer
- 77 How to Sharpen Your Knife and Ax . . . John Taylor
- 78 Hummingbird Feeder . . . Paul Berggren
- 85 A Battery-Powered Code Blinker . . . Glenn Wagner
- 87 Westward Ho! . . . Clyde Baker

REGULAR FEATURES

- 6 Hitchin' Rack
- 12 Hobby Hows . . . Pearl Hanig
- 14 Platter Chatter . . . Ernest Doclar
- 24 A Few Words from the Chief . . . Joseph A. Brunton, Jr.
- 62 Buddy Up! . . . Green Bar Bill
- 80 Stamps and Coins . . . W. Arthur McKinney
- 82 Gifts and Gimmicks
- 90 Think and Grin

Credits: Cover photo, Leonard Nadel; New Jersey Division of Fish and Game photo, p. 5 (top, center); American Water Ski Association photo, p. 5 (bottom, center); UN Food and Agriculture Organization photo, p. 5 (right); Peter Porges drawings, pp. 20, 22-3; Art Beck photo, p. 26. DESIGNER: BOB CROZIER

WHEN I LOOK BACK,

It takes a long-legged lass from Liechtenstein, running for Stevenson High's

By JACK RITCHIE

Greta was an irritated wet Liechtensteiner.

"Appearances were deceiving," she said firmly. "I was *not* drowning."

"Sorry," I said. "If it's going to spoil your whole day, I'll throw you back in."

It was one of those warm September days and Greta and my sister, Maggie, had talked me into taking them up to Blue Lake for a last day before the start of school.

I left them sunning themselves on the dock and loaded my fishing tackle onto a rented boat.

That's how I happened to be near the far shore when I looked back and noticed Greta in the water and having trouble. I think I got there just in time to hand her the blade end of an oar and pull her to the boat, but Greta didn't seem to want to agree.

She took off her bathing cap and shook loose her hair. "At home I am perfectly capable of swimming at least three kilometers and this lake of yours should give me no trouble. It is but three miles in diameter and—as we all know—a mile is only five-eighths of a kilometer."

I stowed the oar and got ready to start the outboard motor. "The way I keep reading it, a kilometer is five-eighths of a mile. No wonder at all that you were swallowing water."

"Nonsense. I know a kilometer when I see one."

When we reached the dock, I woke up Maggie and told her what she'd missed.

As soon as we got home, Greta headed for the dictionary. After a few seconds, she bravely conceded. "You are correct, Jerry. A mile is definitely longer than a kilometer. Evidently I was drowning."

Therefore I am in your debt."

"Forget it," I said.

But she looked thoughtful and I had the suspicion that she was going to knit me a sweater for Christmas or something like that.

This year Stevenson High got a girl.

I don't suppose there's anything really wrong or illegal about that, but it surprised us, and Greta was the first Liechtensteiner to show up who wasn't wearing *lederhosen*.

It's been going on for years. This exchange student program. Every year this *Gymnasium*—which is what they call a high school in Liechtenstein—sends over one of its kids for a year and Stevenson High sends back one of ours.

Liechtenstein is a small up-and-down country between Switzerland and Austria and is 62 to 64 square miles in size—depending on whose encyclopedia you like to use.

Anyway, when we found out that the initials in G. F. Steiner stood for Greta Freida, it called for some fast reshuffling at our house and I got the small bedroom and Greta and my sister shared the big front one.

Greta is as blonde as you can get, is gray-eyed and slim, and the only girl I ever knew who collected stamps.

She explained that to me when she unpacked her album. "Lichtenstein stamps are famous all over the world and so naturally I specialize in them. From one-fifth to one-fourth of our national income is from the sale of stamps. Whenever there is a danger of unemployment, we issue another stamp and use the proceeds to finance another public work."

I had to admire that.

She went on. "My father is chairman of the Stamp Issuing Committee, which must maintain a delicate balance so as not to issue so many stamps that a deflation in value results; yet it also remains the national duty to issue as many as the traffic will bear."

School started on the ninth of September and by the end of the week Coach McNair put us through our first football scrimmage.

When I came home that afternoon, my

mother noticed me rubbing my arm and wanted to know what was wrong.

"Nothing serious," I said. "Just a little bruise."

She sighed. "Football in the fall, basketball in winter, and baseball in spring. Everything except cross-country running."

Greta took her side. "Perhaps you devote too much time to athletics? Does this not possibly play havoc with your academic grades?"

"His average last year was A minus," my sister said enviously. "He got four As and one B."

Greta smiled and nodded. "You see, Jerry? If you had concentrated sufficiently upon academic work instead of sports, you would have gotten five As. In which subject did you receive this B?"

Greta recovered. "But you are of course a sports star?"

There was a little silence all around and I guess I got somewhat red. "Well, not exactly."

The thing is that while I always earn my letter in any sport I go out for, it's always by a matter of seconds picked up here and there. Like if we're leading by 20 points in a basketball game and there're two minutes left, the coach puts me in. Or say with four minutes to go in football and we're ahead 28 to 0, I get the chance to play right halfback.

It isn't that I stumble over my feet or anything, it's just that there are always a couple of kids who are better.

It would bother me a whole lot if I weren't so doggone well-adjusted.

After supper, Greta went into the kitchen to help my mother and Maggie with the dishes. I could hear them talking.

"I understand that everyone was expecting a male student from Liechtenstein again this year," Greta said. "Were you disappointed?"

Maggie was doing (To page 67)



I SEE EVERYBODY

winless cross-country team, to put second-string Jerry on the right track.

"Miss Thomas and I matched step for step. Not until the last ten yards did I manage to pull ahead, and that was the way we flashed across the finish line."



When I Look Back I See Everybody

➡ (Continued from page 35) washing. "Well, not disappointed. Just surprised. Because every year Liechtenstein's been sending over somebody who pulls his weight in sports. We sent them a real cute high jumper this year."

"Oh?" Greta said thoughtfully. "And so you got nothing in return?"

"Now, Greta," my mother said. "Don't think of it that way."

There was the sound of dishes being stacked and then Greta said, "This cross-country running. Is this like what it sounds?"

"Sure," Maggie said. "A bunch of the boys get together and jump fences and water and things like that."

"There is jumping?" Greta said. "But not very high or far? Basically the sport is running, and anyone can do that? No?"

I grinned slowly. Was it possible that Greta would actually . . .

The next afternoon, I was out on the football field, practicing punting and keeping an eye on the women's side of the gymnasium building.

Sure enough, out came Greta with Miss Thomas, who's the girls' gym director, and they walked down to where the cross-country team was assembled on the track behind the goalposts.

I stopped what I was doing and edged over there.

Greta wore track shoes, shorts and a Stevenson High sweat shirt. I grinned and waved to her, but she just lifted her head a little higher and ignored me.

Miss Thomas is nearly 26 or 27 and

when she isn't teaching, she's playing tennis or golf and she's what you'd call a fierce competitor.

The gold whistle was still swinging from her neck when she stopped in front of Mr. Bingham.

Mr. Bingham's the cross-country coach, though from what I've seen, the cross-country team doesn't particularly need one because there doesn't seem to be a lot to coach about.

"I have come to join the cross-country team," Greta announced. "I do not want anyone to be disappointed that Liechtenstein this year did not provide Stevenson High with another athlete."

Miss Thomas folded her arms and scowled down at Coach Bingham. "I can see no reason why a girl shouldn't be on the cross-country team."

Mr. Bingham pushed his glasses back up on his nose. "You're quite right."

"We do not discriminate because of race, creed, color or sex," Miss Thomas said.

Mr. Bingham nodded. "Gracious, no."

"Well," Miss Thomas demanded. "Is she or is she not on the team?"

"She's on the team," Mr. Bingham said quickly. "She's on the team."

Miss Thomas seemed a little disappointed that it came that easy, but she took it like a sport.

Mr. Bingham cleared his throat. "Now, Greta, cross-country is totally an individual effort, which is devoted mostly to running over hill and dale."

"We do most of our training right here, around and around this track and over an occasional hurdle. However, for today, to get everyone more into the mood of the event, I've laid out a

course to give you an idea of what things are like in the outside world.

"First you will go once around the track, then out the main gate of this stadium and down Jackson Street to the city park. At the playground teeter-totters, bear right down the path to the bubblers, and then right again to the buffalo pen and from there on back to the stadium and once more around the track. Are there any questions?"

Greta raised her hand. "On our purple uniforms we have these numbers which are yellow. Also there is the orange piping trimming our shorts. Really, this is garish."

Coach Bingham mulled that over for a while. "Well, the school colors happen to be purple and yellow. They were voted on by the student body some 30 or 40 years ago. I don't know how Liechtenstein handles these things, but this is a democracy and *vox populi*, you know."

Greta nodded. "But how did we acquire the orange trim?"

Coach Bingham looked at the sky for a little while. "Look, Greta, why don't you circulate a petition and we'll see what we can do about the color scheme."

Then he sat down on a camp chair, glanced at his watch, and said, "All right, off you go."

And they did. There were about 15 of them, including Greta.

From what I know, cross-country is mostly a grind. You have to pace yourself so that you'll still be around for the final sprint.

But it didn't seem Greta knew that. She took off like it was the 100-yard dash and disappeared out of the main

gate before the rest of the team made it even halfway around the track.

Mr. McNair, the football coach, blew his whistle and we went back to practicing.

About 20 minutes passed and then the first returnee came puffing in for the final lap around the track, and he was male gender.

The second runner was also male. And the third. And it went on like that, until the last man staggered in, and still no Greta.

We stopped football practice again and waited and watched the main entrance.

People started getting worried and they looked my way—considering that Greta roomed with my sister, I guess—and so finally I said, "All right, I guess I'm elected to look for her."

Miss Thomas seemed to feel some responsibility and she spoke up too. "I'll help you."

So together we trotted out of the stadium and headed toward Jackson Park. My football cleats hitting the sidewalk weren't exactly noiseless and now and then they even threw off sparks. Anyway, people knew I was coming and stepped out of our way.

Every once in a while Miss Thomas shaded her eyes against the setting sun and peered ahead, but no Greta.

At the bubbler in the park, Miss Thomas made the turn and kept running, but I stopped to take a drink. When I looked up, there was this park attendant looking at me.

"Lose a football, son?" he asked.

"No," I said. "A girl. About 16. With long blond hair and wearing

(Continued on next page) ➡



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track shorts and track shoes.

He seemed a little relieved that somebody else had seen her too. "She passed by here about 15 minutes ago."

So, anyway, we were on the right track—so to speak. I caught up with Miss Thomas after a while. She was going at a good clip and frowned a little when I pulled even. It seemed to me that she upped the pace a little.

When we reached the buffalo pen and turned right, there was still no sign of Greta.

We loped out of Jackson Park and headed back toward the stadium. I had to stop to tie one of my shoelaces and when I caught up with Miss Thomas again, she seemed to glower at me. Her face was reddening, but still she didn't cut the pace any.

Side by side we pounded around the last corner and up there ahead of us, trotting easy, we could see Greta just turning into the stadium.

Now Miss Thomas really picked them up and put them down, and I had trouble keeping up with her.

Inside the stadium, I was ready to stop, but Miss Thomas seemed to want to finish it off with a last lap around the track and I found myself going along.

We passed Greta at the north turn, and she blinked as we roared by.

Miss Thomas and I matched step for step and it wasn't until the last ten yards that I managed to pull ahead two or three feet and that was the way we crossed the finish line.

Believe me, I was tired and Miss Thomas looked as if she could use some oxygen too.

We were both still working on that project when Greta trotted across the finish line and she still wasn't even breathing hard.

She smiled all around and then said, "There seems to have occurred a breakdown in communications. First, what is a teeter-totter?"

Mr. Bingham explained.

She nodded. "And a bubbler?"

He told her. "Sometimes it's called a fountain."

She agreed. "And what is a buffalo?"

He described one for her.

She shook her head. "That is *not* a buffalo. That is a *bison*, a native American product. I passed this exhibit by and did not make the turn until I reached the water buffalo, which is the *true* buffalo. I did not suspect any misdirection until I passed a sign indicating I had reached the city limits."

Coach Bingham thought about that. Our city limits aren't too far from the stadium, but if you do it by foot, it's still a stretch.

"You went all the way to the city limits?" he asked. "And when you got back here you weren't even winded?"

"Well," Greta said, "when I realized my error, I stopped and borrowed bus fare from a very nice old lady who was burning leaves. I left the bus a block from the stadium and resumed running."

By now Miss Thomas was breathing almost normally and she scowled at me. "I am in excellent condition."

"Yes, ma'am," I said, because what else can you say to a statement like that?

"I mean," she said evenly, "that I spend a considerable portion of my time in training and I would have been willing to bet my gold whistle that I could outrun anyone here. In the longer distances, of course. And yet despite

that football uniform, those shoes, that drink at the bubbler, and the untied shoelace, you still came in first."

Now everybody looked at me, especially Mr. Bingham, and I could see what was going through their beady little minds.

"No," I said, pretty loud. "That's out. I'm not switching to cross-country."

Coach McNair had come off the football field. "Well, now, Jerry," he said. "I'd give that a little thought."

Boy, that hurt. I mean a guy's own football coach suggesting that he join the cross-country team.

I quickly grabbed a football and found something to do at the other end of the field.

When Greta and I walked home that evening, I expected her to bring up the subject again, and she did.

"There is the satisfaction of your doing what you can do best," she said, "and there is also the matter of your doing what is best for the school. Stevenson High apparently can win baseball, basketball and football games without you, but can this be said also for cross-country running?"

"I don't know," I said stiffly, "and I don't particularly care."

She abruptly changed the subject. "By the way, I have written my parents that you saved my life. They were touched."

The season's first cross-country meet was held the next week and Greta came in 36th in a field of 37, just nosing out a freshman with a terrible cold.

Those who placed in the top ten got to read their names in the newspaper, but guess who had her picture printed big on the sports page?

That Saturday we had our first football game too, and the next day I brooded over the fact that I hadn't gotten into the game at all.

Greta came into the living room. "My father and the Stamp Issuing Committee have created a new series of stamps. This one delineates sports—in this case skiing, skating, hockey and one-man bobsledding." She showed me the stamps. "These will become collectors' items."

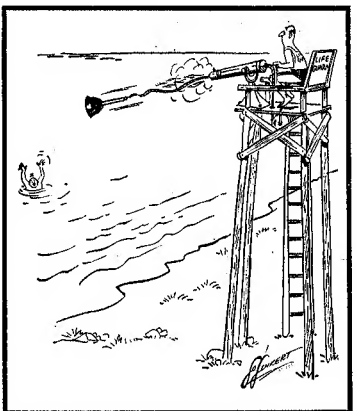
I glanced at them and nodded.

She handed me a magnifying glass. "Would you care to examine them?"

I shrugged and did. There was this guy taking off from a ski slope, and this skater with a muffler flying, and this hockey player about to clobber the puck, and this bobsled rider who...

I stared closer and I could feel the color creeping up my neck. Every one of them... the skier, the hockey player, the skater, the bobsledder...

They were all me!



I looked at Greta.

She smiled. "It is my way of repaying you for saving my life. I borrowed one of your snapshots and sent it to my father. He and the committee immediately did the rest."

I closed my eyes.

"I have extra sheets," she said. "Shall I place them on the bulletin board at school?"

I almost jumped out of my chair. "Heck, no!"

She was a little startled. "You would not be pleased?"

I didn't want to hurt her feelings, but a guy could get ribbed from here to there and back again if something like that got into circulation. "Look, Greta," I said, "In America we play it cool and modest. Especially on stamps. So let's just keep this our little personal secret. Just yours, mine and the collectors'."

After a little thought, she seemed to understand. She studied the stamps again, sighed and changed the subject. "Have you reconsidered joining the cross-country team? Everybody really thinks you'd be much happier there."

Or had she changed the subject?

I blinked. Did I detect something in the tone of her voice? Suppose I *didn't* reconsider joining the cross-country team? Would she actually put those stamps on the bulletin board? Or pass them around in school? Or maybe mention something to the newspapers?

I swallowed and came to a fast decision. "I'm switching to the cross-country team immediately."

She was happy about that. "Wonderful. Then we can be together."

Not if you keep coming in 36th, I thought.

And then she stared at me. "Just one moment," she said evenly. "I detect something here. Why this sudden and dramatic change?"

I didn't say anything, but I guess she read my mind.

Her eyes widened. "Blackmail? You think I am blackmailing you?" Her voice rose. "Never! Never would I blackmail anybody. Ask my father. Ask my mother. I will tear up the stamps. You are a free agent. You may go back to your football team and the subject is closed."

And she meant it too.

But the truth is that I'd been thinking about cross-country running. It was kind of fun coming in first even if it meant beating only Miss Thomas.

I didn't say anything now, but I thought I'd give it another try. I had the suspicion that I might even get pretty good at the sport.

When Greta calmed down, she took a clipboard from her school briefcase and handed it to me. "Would you sign this petition which I am circulating?"

There were quite a few other names already there and so I added mine.

Eventually Greta had enough of them to present to the principal of Stevenson High, and he called for a special referendum.

We kicked out purple and yellow as the school colors—getting rid of the orange trim at the same time—and voted for new colors to replace them.

I guess not enough of the fellows bothered to vote though, because the school colors are now cerulean blue and mallow pink.

That's what I was wearing when I began winning my races.

It takes some getting used to.

Wearing those colors, I mean.